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RISK MANAGEMENT as a long term PROCESS and not was a specific, short term PRODUCT

As we already now, there are a series of actions and interventions which have been developed in the area of prevention, mitigation, reconstruction, preparedness and disaster relief, which throughout the years have required an important and significant investment of resources and efforts from a group of actors (populations, organizations and institutions).

In spite of the importance of these issues, it is regretful to see that all the efforts are totally dispersed, with experiences that are isolated one from the other and actions which have been specific interventions for the most part – in response to disasters which have occurred – lacking long term vision. There hasn't been the intention of either going beyond the intended product or result (be it housing, equipment replacement, re-vegetation or restoration of the ground cover of mountain slopes etc.) without considering to what extent that result meets the real capacities

and what other could be carried out to ensure that the investment made is not lost once the project is finished. In summary, ensuring a connection with the daily life, with the needs of the populations and therefore with the solutions as part of a continuous process of local risk management. All of those have been determining factors of the low sustainability of these efforts throughout time, and the low ownership on the part of the beneficiaries or those committed with these initiatives.

What capacity do the initiatives have for generating long term processes beyond the time limits and the delimitating objectives of the project or punctual intervention. In these cases, those experiences which we have detected as NATIVE are the ones that illustrate clearly this assertion as it is in those cases that the connection between the case studies and the longer term processes which take place in the same scenarios is more evident,

and the experiences which were studied help to consolidate.

In regard to the projects supported by UNDP and DIPECHO, in several of the case studies, one of the main problems is that they are executed by foreign organizations (NGO's, in some cases European, without headquarters in the country) which have an ad-hoc presence in the territory of application, only during the project. To the latter we should add the weak connection to the local counterparts, both national and local; as well as serious problems for accessing and or transferring information to third parties. This causes that once the project is finished, the concrete results also end as well as the whole experience. In spite of this practice which is somewhat generalized, there are also other experiences (as well as local institutions with higher commitment) which have transcended beyond the project and the specific results that were expected.

- The case from Colombia, known as "Guardianas de la Ladera" (Guardians of the Mountain Side) aims to incorporate communities living in mountain slope

areas in the city of Manizales, in risk management activities promoted by the municipal administration. More specifically, this initiative transforms the maintenance of infrastructure for stabilizing mountain slope areas in an alternate source of income for the women head of household in the same communities. This strategy falls within long term processes which have received formal backing from the different administrations of the city and seeks to reduce the risk of land sliding in a city which literally, grows perched on the mountain slopes in conditions which would seem, in theory, impossible.

- The Peruvian experience "Self-managed Urban Community, HUAYCÁN" is about a proposal of building the city by the inhabitants, in agreement with the local authorities respecting or not respecting the norms, regarding planning and urbanization, but addressing each problem as a challenge to be met. One of those challenges and concerns was to respect the initial urban proposal which was based on preserving stream channels and

keeping canyons which carry mud or rain unobstructed. Notwithstanding that positive aspect, a concern arises with respect to the disorganized and spontaneous occupation of the hill slopes which occurred during the last years. That occupation was not addressed or directed by the authorities, or by the neighborhood leaders, which has created risk conditions in some sectors of the settlement; Risk which materialized in the land slides occurred some years ago which affected part of the population.

- The Venezuelan experience "CATUCHE Social Consortium", similarly to HUAYCÁN, is an experience aiming for the construction of the city led and directed by the protagonists: the population, and at certain stages, by the municipal authorities or some sectoral institutions or organizations. The implementation of prevention, mitigation or preparedness measures does not respond to the situation at hand, but rather they are the product of an awareness process of the population in view of the laws of their housing

which is a problem that received opportune attention from the neighborhood organization and the municipality for the relocation of the affected families. This illustrates how the organization has included as a top priority and concern to maintain constant interventions for reducing their risk levels.

- The Colombian project "Disaster Prevention and Relief component of the Strategy of Alliances for Territorial programs for Peace and Development" from its inception appeared as a proposal with characteristics of a process. However, it is an experience that is just starting which has awakened the interest from many municipalities as well as local and regional disaster prevention and relief committees, because the areas have numerous disaster occurrences as well as displaced populations which required necessarily the intervention of municipal authorities rescue organizations.
- The project "Program for Disaster Prevention in Communities and Institutional Strengthening in Response to Disasters" in Ve-

nezuela, is an example of a case where interventions are conceived more as specific products which do not generate process beyond the project itself. This was basically a training project where the counterparts were the Venezuelan Red Cross and some schools from selected communities. However, the project is developed in a moment of high sensibility towards the issue of disasters (after the land slides of 1999). The structure, organizational proposal and the method applied did not allow for the proposal to be long term. The intention was simply to apply and carry out a specific number of training workshops which did not follow a strategy for continuity or follow-up and much less a strategy for replication and commitment from the national counterparts or the beneficiaries of the training sessions. This project accomplished an emergency role, specific results and quantitative accomplishments of the number of workshops and the number of attendants for each one.

- The project “Strengthening of local competences for natural disaster prevention in the northernmost region of Potosí” in Bolivia, considered a set of actions through which it was sought to guarantee the continuity of the processes beyond the formal conclusion of the project: The training of local actors, building consensus among different actors and social sectors, the incorporation of the “risk management” dimension within the regular school programs and the strengthening of existing local administration structures. In spite of those efforts, the problem of the short term vision affected the achievement and consolidation of the processes, uncovering some weaknesses in regard to the possible follow-up of the educational and the functioning of the early warning system, even though a large part of the equipment had already been acquired through the project.
- The project “Strengthening of local Civil Defense competencies in disaster preparedness” in Ecuador, developed some ac-

tions that make it possible to achieve continuity of the local process, such as: creation of their risk map for the city of Puerto Francisco de Orellana, and its application as a planning instrument for the municipality; provision of computers to the provincial and county level Civil Defense offices for gathering disaster related information; training and conformation of new volunteer groups from the com-

munity and neighboring areas, which were given basic equipment and committed themselves to assist in facing events which could occur in the future. On the other hand, the commitment acquired by the institutions who participated in the specific course through the attendance of their permanent staff, reinforces the sustainability and institutional support beyond the turnover of authorities.

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In order to understand the progress made in regards to risk management it must be possible to recognize the proportion between the endogenous and the external aspects in every process...

Each country, each context, each territory, presents a series of conditions which are characteristic of their organization and socio-political system, which in turn represent capacities and opportunities adequate for the development of proposals and actions carried out in them. This innate condition or characteristic may be a factor that favors sustainability and/or continuity for the processes to be developed.

What is necessary to identify and highlight in the systemization of case studies is what the real situation was of the selected "local environment" before the intervention (risk issues, capacities, culture and practices, etc.) and after the intervention (experience or project) what is the current situation. This same logic could be summarized in two questions:

- 1) ¿What is the specificity of the context as far as the basic capacities of the projects or intervention (characterization, capacities, conditions)?
- 2) ¿What is the contribution of the project?
 - In the Colombian project “Strengthening of the local competences in prevention and reduction of natural disasters in six municipalities of the Quindío department” the achievements were based upon the existing capacities of the local actors: the municipal interest towards the issue of risks and disaster, institutional coordination and commitment for the development of the process, active participation and commitment from the communities, local capacity for the development of scientific - technical studies, existing norms in the country for the inclusion of the risk issues into territorial zoning plans. An important contribution of the NGO in charge of executing the project was a methodology for intervention based on the determination of homogeneous geographical areas, which was adapted and adopted by the local actors and counterparts, the generation of communication processes based on radio programs, didactic charts, training workshops for children, etc.
 - The project “Strengthening of local and Civil Defense competencies in disaster preparedness” in Ecuador, was developed upon local capacities and the work previously carried out by the Civil Defense and the community organization. The project contributed with trainings for Civil Defense volunteers and members of the fire department and rescue teams; awareness and conformation of the COE’s; the provision of basic emergency and relief equipment; the creation and strengthening of a local fire department due to the frequent fires in the area; the implementation of radio campaigns; and, the inclusion of the disaster prevention plan in the municipal development plan.
 - The project “Project to support the Venezuelan Emergency” in Venezuela, was based upon the commitment and the agreement with the government of the sta-

te of Miranda which favored the execution of the project. It is important to take into consideration that the national government's established criteria for reconstruction is to "not build or rebuild in risk areas". The executors involved in the project contributed with their proposals and projects in the areas of socio-economic rehabilitation, industrial and agricultural reactivation, education and health equipment rehabilitation, improvement of the environmental

and sanitation conditions, etc. However, the existence of a monitoring and administrative control system was noticeable. There was not equal commitment with the follow up of the project and its integration and ownership from the local counterparts and direct beneficiaries. This can be deduced from the sustainability problems which currently affect the actions and proposals executed within the project.

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RISK MANAGEMENT seeks to recover, value, revalue, systematize, create awareness and shed light on the set of strategies which are natural, authentic and native and which are applied and developed by the communities in the area of risks and disasters (projects, proposals, practices, initiatives, interventions, etc.). Those initiatives are usually isolated, dispersed and not recognized.

The purpose of such rescue and recognition is, especially when there is external intervention or if it is promoted by a particular project (UNDP or DIPECHO case), to identify to what extent the proposals,

actions and products of the experience have drawn or observed the local knowledge and practice. The intervention (experience or project) is rather directed or aimed at rescuing, adapting, reorienting or

improving (if need be) those practices and actions of the local agents.

The importance of those interventions lies in their effort to rescue the local experience and praxis, strengthening them with the new contributions and knowledge (scientific, methodological, technological), exchanges, technical advice, with the purpose of contributing to the reduction of disaster risk.

- The experience "SUKA KOLLUS" selected in Bolivia, is framed not only within "immediate" risk management processes, but seeks to re-adopt, in admirable fashion, the set of processes and strategies of territorial ownership dating back to pre-Columbian times, when what we now call "risk management" was an integral part of the culture, not only in their technological and material expressions, but also in their symbolic expressions which were an intrinsic part of the former.

Since 1992, this initiative which is being developed in the Bolivian highlands has the main objective of recovering, researching and disseminating sustain-

nable cultivation practices dating back to the Tiwanacu Empire, before the Incas. The recovery is not limited to the strictly technical aspects of this cultivation method using artificial terraces or raised beds, but it also intends to recover the values and social practices which were part of the context in which the SUKA KOLLUS were developed, which in essence are a collective activity themselves. The SUKA KOLLUS emerge from a social organization based upon solidarity and reciprocity, not only among human beings but also among those and the Earth; hence the fact that they constitute expressions of a culture based upon coexistence with nature, according to which, as in a different context Democritus asserted: "richness does not consist on having many things, but on needing little".

This experience is recognized by its contribution for achieving an "archaeology of memory", but it also projects itself to the future. Through what the project calls "yapuchiris engineers", which are community leaders in charge of identifying and disse-

minating the lessons learned among the members of the community and in other communities, the dialogues of ignorance and the dialogues of wisdom are materialized. They allow for better use of the best recovered traditional knowledge together with the best aspects of modern technology.

The high profitability of this cultural practice has given the communities participating in the project and endogenous tool for facing the challenges of the market; for reducing their vulnerability towards the threats of globalization, at the same time that it strengthens their identity and the feeling of belonging to the territory.

- The Ecuadorian initiative "Re-vegetation project for the Esmeraldas city slopes" is born from the concern of the community which, seeing itself affected constantly by the occurrence of rains and land sliding, undertakes the task of reforesting the mountain slopes. For this purpose, they develop and use simple technologies which are improved with support from an NGO which promotes the use and the

diversification of other alternatives for production and reforestation with grass imported from Africa. A mixed re-vegetation technique was developed, integrating the knowledge of the community with external technical support.

- Another Ecuadorian project "Emergency project in favor of populations at risk due to the ash fall from El Reventador Volcano –Napo and Sucumbíos Provinces", on the other hand shows two types of practices totally different from each other: one good practice and another which could be qualified as a not-desirable practice.

A negative aspect, which in many cases and projects tends to be used as practice and which was also applied at the start of the intervention is that an existing project which was created in order to respond to the specific situation of the Tungurahua volcano was tried or applied to another community, without variations and following the same methods and results as if they were following the same formula for different realities and situations. A consequence

of this practice which consists on "application of recipe projects" without putting them in contexts or connecting them to reality, can be found in the fact that although the project was able to strengthen the capacities of the community in regard to volcanic risks through higher awareness and knowledge of the issue, the proposed objective of improving the populations quality of life through training on agricultural techniques for improving cultivation practices, construction of water reservoirs etc, some of those new conditions made the community more vulnerable to the occurrence of land sliding in the area.

This experience also demonstrates, on the other hand, a positive aspect which has been the respect of cultural characteristics and customs of the population such as community identity and community based work, based on "Mingas".

- The case study "Rehabilitation of the affected zones of Arequipa and Tacán – Earthquake 2001" in Perú, focused on the reconstruction of housing. For the

implementation of the reconstruction two organizations were appointed; one of them is a national institution called SENSICO, and the other was an NGO. In the case of SENSICO the reconstruction of the edifications was done using construction technology native to the area and with much cultural tradition. However, the safety component which was lacking in the destroyed housing was added. For this purposes the beneficiaries and the self builders were trained on the use of reinforced adobe for the construction of units; an educational process which was mostly hands on.

- In the Colombian initiative "Guardians of the Mountain Slope" we also find examples on how popular or spontaneous strategies can be recuperated and qualified by using modern technology, in order to face crisis situations. It is noticeable how communities institutionalize, take advantage of and improve the communal knowledge in order to adapt to hostile conditions of the environment.

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RISK MANAGEMENT means NOT IMPOSSING, confirming or consolidating impositive and /or foreign relationships which promote domination, dependence, gender inequity, etc.

Currently, it is possible to assert that a large part of the initiatives in the region regarding local management is generated externally. That is to say, that it is not a product stemming from the demands of local social actors, but rather the result of offers from external agents such as NGO's, government organizations, international agencies, etc. In consequence, the decisions about areas or zones for intervention is the result of primary decisions from those same actors and they respond to their own rationales. There is enough evidence that shows how external organizations choose according to their own criteria, or in many other cases under "pressure" of different kinds. Thus, in the region there are dozens, if not hundreds of localities that are left outside of the circuit of external actors, and others which have a surplus of project offerings¹⁸.

This demand which is born from external stimuli – external agents, but also from an external vision strange to the local reality – has generated in many cases, as a consequence, some "vices" in the practice or forms of intervening and developing the experience (project or proposals). In light of the experiences which have been developed, we can see how many foreign techniques or technologies (many times not adequate) have been – not promoted – but rather imposed and in many cases have generated a dependence relationship in terms of maintenance and re-supplying. In other cases, this has caused changes, alterations and "even denial" of cultural patterns or aspects which are traditional and adequate to the social and natural environment.

¹⁸ Document "A Guide on Good Practices derived from the parameters of Local Risk Management", drafted by Allan Lavel within the Project for the Systematization of Local Risk Management Experiences in Central America, implemented by the CEPREDENAC and BCPR-UNDP.

Some examples of this phenomenon can be found in the hydro-meteorological networks and warning systems, use of software and systems or equipment which are not compatible or can not be supplied locally or at country level, replacement with housing which does not respond to cultural patterns in regard to design and use of materials, agricultural practices not compatible or not adequate for the environment, etc.

Other aspects which illustrate these patterns of imposition are the application of formats and types of training, education or organization which do not correspond or fit the local customs, organization, or language. It can also be seen when external actors execute and apply experiences within the framework of the interventions, without the support, or even without consulting the local actors. These are just some of the observations which can be pointed out after the experience in the issue of disasters throughout these years.

- The project "Emergency project in favor of populations at risk due to the ash fall from El Reven-

tador volcano – Napo and Sucumbios provinces" was not born as a project integrated to the local dynamics and did not necessarily promote coordination channels or mechanisms with local actors and counterparts. On the contrary, independent Emergency Operation Committees (COE's) were organized in every county, without coordination between them. Upon the basis of the first lessons learned and in order to optimize resources, the project team implemented a coordination effort with local actors as well as with national and international organizations which were acting in the area of influence of the project, being able to achieve the efficient application of actions and the resources in the area.

The lack of coordination between the COE's can be seen in many aspects. One of the most critical is the low sustainability of the processes generated by the project. Additionally, weaknesses were also evident at the time of joint execution of specific emergency actions. One

example was the shipment of a truck carrying food for 4,500 families, to an area where only 120 families resided, and when in reality the total number of affected families reached 450. Even a long time after the event, one could still find the delivered products (as emergency supplies) being sold in neighboring communities.

There were many actions implemented and applied as a project: internet-based evaluations were carried out without visiting or keeping records on site, models not adequate and not applicable for the area were applied, interruption of governmental projects was caused (as in the case of the PRAGUAS initiative which had been in place for a year in the region and was affected by the implementation of this initiative). One of the reasons found for this, somewhat unfitting intervention, is that these types of projects are adjudicated to organizations which do not work in the area.

- The Peruvian experience "Development of local competencies for disaster response and mitigation in communities vulnerable to earthquakes in the Moquegua, Torata and Samegua districts" applied and demonstrated as an implementation strategy the involvement and training of young volunteers (JOVOS) in order to integrate them to the disaster relief work. They were trained in first aid, emergency drills, etc; and they also worked in the process of gathering information. Moreover, they were allowed to use an office temporarily for carrying out their work.

Once the project was over, the youth started to lose support and recognition by the community, which surely they had when the project was in implementation phase. By the end of the project, they were marginalized for their lack of experience and their youth, which ended in their loss of office space.

The problem was that promoting involvement of juvenile committees or clubs as commu-

nity volunteers, which is a widespread practice in the urban setting, can not be applied in the same fashion, in areas which are smaller and more closed. This dynamic was "imposed by the organization" which did not even foresee the insertion of the young volunteers in the municipality, Civil Defense or other local institutions.

- The project "Program for Disaster Prevention in Communities and Institutional Strengthening in Response to Disasters" implemented in Venezuela is also an example of a project conceived by an NGO, in this case international. In spite of the numerous and important training actions which were performed and promoted, the weakness stems from the "erroneous idea" that "outside, those who know it think, in order to apply inside those who know, and without replicating". A clear example of this, was the delivery of training actions in regards to seismic activity and earthquakes only a few days after the Vargas tragedy in 1999, when the popula-

tion was totally concerned with the probable occurrence of land sliding and floodings.

- In the Colombian initiative "Guardians of the Mountain slope" we see how in order to survive, the extremely high risk conditions the communities living in the mountain slopes have developed informal and spontaneous risk management strategies throughout generations. Those strategies are known in Medellin, another Colombian city with similar conditions in its hillsides, as "mountain-urbanism". The fact that in spite of the catastrophic events which affect these communities periodically they are able to carry on with their daily lives, is proof that such communities are filled with "spontaneous experts" in risk management.

The project "Guardians of the Mountain slope" gathers under a single umbrella the formal strategies of municipal administrations, with the informal strategies of the communities at risk; both originating from much longer term processes and which

will have to be prolonged in the future as the "marriage" between the communities and the hillsides can not be dissolved.

The sustainability of the strategy itself as it has been proposed in the "Guardians of the Mountain slope" (which includes an economic compensation by the municipality to the mothers head of family who perform conservation tasks) will depend on different factors such as the political disposition of the authority in charge and the availability of

resources. It is not possible to predict at this time if the communities will continue executing these type of activities (which benefit the same community) the moment that for one reason or another payments are interrupted. One thing is certain: the learning originating from these types of processes generate new tools that strengthen the capacity of the communities which inhabit risk areas in order to continue living in spite of the "annihilating evidences".

6a) Gender Equality

Some reflections regarding the issue¹⁹:

Gender focus is a work tool that allows us to identify, visualize and analyze the existing inequalities between men and women as a consequence of the different value, prestige and power that are implicit in the identities and roles which have been assigned to each one. The objective of using that tool is precisely to try to eliminate inequalities so that men and women can have the same possibilities for exercising their right to health, employment and participation in civil-political life, etc.

The application of gender focus in a specific project or program implies clear recognition that there are disadvantages of inequalities between men and women and the such project should contribute to eliminating them²⁰. Therefore, applying gender focus does not necessarily mean carrying out activities with women, or ensuring that women participate in the activities of the program. It also means to be aware of the existing inequalities and to contribute to eliminate the behavioral models and the stereotypes which determine a situation of disadvantage for women – and for men – with the aim of influencing in the conformation of more just and egalitarian gender relations.

19 Text taken from the document "Characterization of the gender situation in the area of intervention of PREDERES and Action Plan" prepared by the consultant M. Visitación Cañizal Fernández within the framework of the program "Disaster Prevention and Social Reconstruction in the State of Vargas. PREDERES" financed by Venezuela and the European Community.

20 Mesa de Género (2002): Instrumentos operativos para incorporar el enfoque de género en los proyectos financiados y cofinanciados por la Comisión Europea en Guatemala. Oficina de la Comisión Europea en Guatemala.

The aforementioned statements will be important at the moment of analyzing and delving into the experiences or case studies in the issue of local risk management to be systematized (LRM).

When we talk about local experiences, these take place in a territory where relationships between society and nature are established and therefore it is also there that the inequalities or unequal power relationships between men and women can be visualized. Those relationships will be visible and will be determining factors both in the configuration of the risk conditions as well as in the risk management and in the issues concerning vulnerabilities or weaknesses capacities, skills and opportunities.

If we consider the hypothesis that risk management means NOT to promote unequal relationships or gender inequality, then we will have to try to prove to what extent and in what measure, in the development and implementation of the experience it has been taken into consideration the visualization, identification and analysis of those differences and power relationships between men and women.

- The initiative "Guardians of the Mountain slope" implemented in Manizales, Colombia, aimed from its inception to involve and benefit directly the women of the community. The objective of improving environmental sustainability and employment for the vulnerable population benefited the women heads of family who were directly involved with the project and received employment opportunities. The criteria for selecting the group of women participants were: to live in a risk area, to be women head of household, and to be of legal age. This initiative is born, supported and financed by the municipality and corporation for the development of Caldas.

The women participants from the experience are hired by the municipality and receive all the legal employment benefits. The municipality, from its perspective, has achieved a solution which not only means higher participation and work with the community, but also represents savings in respect to maintenance of the mountain slope areas.

On their side, the Guardians carry-out several actions that benefit the community such as cleaning the hill sides and constantly monitoring the progress of the implementation so that, in case a problem is detected, it can be communicated timely to the authorities in charge. They have also received training courses delivered by the Red Cross, and at the same time, they educate the population, having become innate educators who also exchange information with others.

- The Venezuelan experience "Program for Disaster Prevention in Communities and Institutional Strengthening in Response to Disasters" carries out specific training actions in regards to seismic issues. However, from the inception of the project it was proposed to generate and promote women's networks, and to give priority to women attendance in the training courses. The training workshops which were carried out (in areas such as first aid, earthquake prevention and temporary shelter ma-

nagement), were attended by an estimate of 2184 women and 860 men.

- The project "Rehabilitation of the affected zones of Arequipa and Tacán – Earthquake 2001" implemented in the southern region of Perú for reconstructing destroyed housing was addressed by two organizations. ITDG (an NGO) adopted as one of the criteria for housing beneficiaries that the individuals participating in the reconstruction process be a woman head of household.
- The Ecuadorian experience "Re-vegetation Project of the Esmeraldas city slopes" has an important gender equality component. It involves women in the reforestation process. Women were also beneficiaries of the training and were active participants in the process of formulating community plans. Also, within the framework of the project implementation, the Permanent Women's Forum was promoted as a mechanism for organization and grouping.

Even though we highlight these four cases, regretfully the majority of the identified projects lack the will – as well as the interest and the awareness – for mainstreaming and working with a focus of gender equality in the functioning of community organizations and institutions.

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RISK MANAGEMENT involves a group of actions conducive to promoting, facilitating and strengthening consensus building processes (consensual and agreed inter-sectoral and inter-institutional actions and coordination), transformation and change (decision-making processes and political processes)... to influence in the policies and decisions regarding development.

Just as we recognize that risk is a product of the vulnerability conditions present in our societies as well as from the threats to which they are exposed; similarly there is an explicit recognition of the fact that the current risk conditions in our cities and countries are the result of risk configuration or cons-

truction processes consolidated throughout time, and consequent with the applied models or "the transformation and change processes, sometimes wrongfully or euphemistically called development"²¹.

This recognition of the causes of risk leads to a change of attitude.

21 Document "A Guide on Good Practices derived from the parameters of Local Risk Management", drafted by Allan Lavell within the Project for the Systematization of Local Risk Management Experiences in Central America, implemented by the CEPREDENAC and BCPR-UNDP..

From now on, when we think of solutions or alternate risk management or risk reduction alternatives, we should make sure they are responses that go beyond the simple reactive actions, or the massive application of specific activities tending to solve a particular issue, or the territorial delimitation and the territorial actors involved. The solutions should require a series of correlations: 1) they should integrate to "daily aspects" of the local population or environments; 2) they should have an integral dimension for the intervention, this means that although the activity may be specific (for example, a warning network, or training in emergency relief issues) the way the strategy should be applied has to be –or try to be – integrated to the organizational and operative praxis of the community; 3) they should facilitate the integration of the "risk factor" as an inherent aspect of development; 4) they should promote and facilitate processes for exchange, consensus building or articulation in the local scope or in a wider scope, by integrating or connecting themselves to other territorial levels.

- In the Colombian experience "Disaster Prevention and Relief Component of the Strategy of Alliances for Territorial Programs for Peace and Development", two processes coincide: institutional and communal strengthening for risk management, and the search for coexistence and sustainability in different scenarios of the conflict that affects the country.

The project illustrates a reality not only specific to Colombia, but present throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, and in what is called the "third world" in general (including the "third world" pockets which can be found within developed countries) the areas which tend to have a higher risk level due to anthropic, natural or socio-natural causes tend to coincide with the areas with the lowest governance levels, the areas with higher presence of conflicts which in some cases even become armed conflicts.

We could almost assert that two phenomena which are characteristic of marginalized areas are:

high risk levels and lack of governability.

The authorities in charge of risk management in areas laden with armed conflict in Colombian, have been forced through the years (especially during the last decade when the conflicts have worsened) to develop "informal", or sometimes "silent" strategies for accomplishing their responsibility, especially the responsibility of bringing protection to the population from natural or socio-natural phenomena. Those same authorities and institutions have been careful in order to avoid getting involved in the problems stemming from the armed conflict, which are the responsibility of other authorities. Although they do not intend to be "neutral"²² towards the armed actors, any apparent affiliation or association in favor of any of those groups could

put their work in danger, as well as their lives and integrity²³.

The project we selected as a case study, just started being implemented a few months ago and is contributing to shedding light, systematizing, formalizing and legitimizing many of those strategies which "silently" or spontaneously have come to help those in charge of promoting risk management in areas of armed conflict. This is allowing them to make use in a more efficient manner of the risk management opportunities as a space and opportunity to build coexistence and governability.

In Colombia, as well as in other parts of the world, it has been demonstrated that when being subject to a common threat, the different actors of a conflict start to find elements which eventually may lead to constructive dialogue. What is indeed

22 The concept of "neutrality" is equivocal and those of us who work in risk management cannot be "neutral actors", as if we were beyond the reality of the conflict. It is, however, a different issue to develop strategies which do not endanger people, on one hand; and on the other hand, that allow for the creation of common interest spaces and common concerns, which may facilitate the gathering of different parties in the conflict based on which it can be attempted to build governance.

23 Curiously, at this moment a law proposal is being discussed in Canada, which places under a same authority the prevention of disasters caused by natural threats, the fight against terrorism and other responsibilities as heterogeneous as the prevention of child abuse through the Internet.

true is that risk management opens doors and facilitates the access to areas and people who are out of reach under any other flag.

A space that allows one to carry out work in the area of governability is risk management, as it is an impartial issue in regards to the armed conflict and would allow entering a territory with a neutral position in order to try through this effort, to recover the governability of the area.

In spite of being a process which is just starting, it is interesting to see the interest the issue has generated in the regional and local committees. Other municipalities, aside from the ones already involved have started to join the experience.

- The Colombian initiative "Guardians of the Mountain Slope" is an experience adopted, promoted and financed by the municipality and the Corporation for the Development of Caldas. The fact that this initiative is a municipal proposal that on one hand allows to lower costs for maintenance and control of the hill si-

des and on the other, calls on the community to be part of the solution and at the same time benefits several women heads of household with employment, reaffirms its transcendence and conforms that it should be disseminated to other municipalities.

This experience has transcended and has become imprinted into municipal policy – it is part of the municipal development plan and the territorial zoning plans.

- The Ecuadorian experience "Re-vegetation Project of the Esmeraldas city slopes" is an important initiative to highlight because it is born upon the request of the community, but the search for solutions to the landslide and soil instability is addressed by an NGO, the local authorities and an oil producing company. It demonstrates that it is possible to make oneself heard and to generate a concerted action for the search of possible solutions.
- The project "Emergency Project in favor of populations at risk due to the ash fall from El Reven-

tador volcano – Napo and Sucumbios Provinces" in Ecuador contemplated from the beginning of its execution the need to have a close coordination and support for the municipalities and their different UMDS²⁴, as a medium and long term sustainability strategy for the projects and activities implemented. It was also important to have close cooperation with governmental and non-governmental organizations involved in similar actions and with presence in the area, aside from the active participation of the community and its leaders in each and every one of the processes that were part of the project implementation.

The initiative of involving the higher local instances who undertook the responsibility of coordinating with the project's production and infrastructure com-

ponents was key for the success of the project management. This allowed not only for better planning of activities, but it also facilitated to keep close contact with municipal, Parrish and communal authorities in order to solve eventual obstacles or problems. As a participative strategy, the community was encouraged to work in "mingas"²⁵, with the delivery of food in exchange for work, which was done by the World Food Programme (WFP) in coordination with the municipal government and the Civil Defense Organization.

Important support was received from the Spanish foundation "Ayuda en Accion" which contributed with the construction of the stables for the livestock and contributed with the veterinary communal medical kits. The NGO Pakarina contributed with the donation of seeds

24 Technical instances in charge of directing, coordinating and promoting socio-economic and environmental development processes; becoming the communication bridge between municipal development policies and the needs of the population, as well as the technical team in the supporting entities.

25 Kichwa term used to refer to communal work. For example, if somebody in the community needs to build a house, he or she calls the other members of the community and they build it with their joint effort. They only receive food and drinks during the construction in return. When someone else in the community needs help, everyone is mandated to participate in that minga.

for orchards and material for agricultural training. The protection and rehabilitation of potable water systems and communal centers was done with support (workforce) of the community and in this case, funds from the foundation REPSOL/YPF were integrated. This allowed to increase not only the number of beneficiaries but also the support for health and education centers. Assistance was also received from PAHO/WHO with training material in health and water issues and the support from OCHA for the delivery of community first aid kits for use in cases of emergency, as an add-on to the original project. Additional funds from ECORAE and with didactic material was also received from UNICEF and OCHA.

- The main activities of the project "Development of local competencies for disaster response and mitigation in communities vulnerable to earthquakes in the Moquegua, Torata and Samegua districts" in Perú were the creation of risk maps, prevention and emergency plans, and institutional strengthening.

The target group for institutional strengthening were the technicians from the city administration who received the support from specialized technicians for carrying out training activities and to follow up on the process of elaboration of risk and exposition maps. Other issues where they worked consisted on soil usage plans, prevention and emergency plans (contained within the prevention plans), always trying to incorporate them into municipal emergency plans.

- The Bolivian experience "Strengthening of institutional competence in risk management in the Department of La Paz" which was executed by the Prefecture of La Paz who is also now responsible for maintaining the continuity of the processes, is mainly an institutional initiative, but with local application as it intends to become part of the municipal risk planning. This way, the work already being carried out by the municipality of La Paz in the area of local risk management is strengthened and connected; such work had already started to show results by the time of the start of the

project. This project is an interesting case because it has the foundation of an existing juridical norm which helped the Prefecture to support and address the proposals.

The project's goal was to strengthen the capacity of the Prefecture in the area of risk management and development by building the legal capacity for making viable the creation of a risk management unit. Although for that purpose it would also be necessary to create other legal and juridical instruments.

This experience can also be replicated (after adapting it to the specific context and circumstances) in other municipalities, etc.

- The project "SUKA KOLLUS" in Bolivia, has a central component of recovering ancient practices which can permit the reduction of the risk level and flooding. One aspect which should be taken into consideration is that the traditional social organization of the Andes is a strength in itself, but it also represents a weakness. The strength relies on the fact that two strong values are present:

solidarity and reciprocity, and therefore the value of wealth does not represent or have the same economic connotation for its inhabitants (which at the same time could be a debilitating factor). One weakness which can be found is that farming communities live and coexist, many times, at the margins of national political structures and policies.

Whereas the experience is rich in itself, it also has an important weakness which is the degree of dependence from the PRO-SUKO project which receives financing from the Swiss Cooperation Agency (COSUDE). Such dependence, the deep-rooted regionalism existing in these highland areas, and the lack of interconnectedness with regional or public institutions or with other organizations, make it difficult to replicate this type of experiences or to disseminate massively to other communities of the region.

- In a similar fashion the strength of the Venezuelan experience "CATUCHE Social Consortium" lies in its organizational capacity and its legitimacy and high level

of representation, before its own population and before national and local authorities. It has the capacity of advocating for the community, the respect for their own goals, and for negotiating agreements with national organizations. That capacity has allowed the Consortium to receive economic resources from abroad for the purchase of the land where the buildings for the affected people were built. For that reason also, it has received the recognition from international organizations at international level which have chosen this experience as one of the best habitat practices at an international level.

All the organizational capacity and recognition is limited, in part, by the extremely closed characteristics of the environment, a possible consequence of unmet promises and disappointments from expectations generated by third parties, or from the extreme reservation they have before the possibility (many times erroneous) of suffering an invasion from NGO's or other public or private institutions which are not part of their

organization. This is an experience which is important to make public, disseminate and which has many things to be shared. It can also be a great contribution for the definition of public strategies, proposals and policies in connection with other local driving forces: the municipality.

- Similarly to the aforementioned experience, the Peruvian experience "Self-managed Urban Community Huaycán" finds the basis for its richness and capacity in the strength of the communal organization, in the application and promotion of community participation mechanisms and its capacity for negotiating with municipalities and national-level organizations. The joint effort between local professionals and technicians with the neighborhood leaders for contributing to local development and the creation and implementation of proposals for the habilitation of land plots, housing and services, was an achievement in terms of decision-making and the definition of local urban planning.

During the last years as a consequence of the crumbling of neighborhood organizational structures and the government actions for trying to disrupt those organizations, that community, as well as many others, was affected by problems related to parallel structures and low cohesion among leaders or neighborhood delegates and the population. Another distorting factor which occurred – most of the time unintentionally, was the presence, or "invasion from many NGO's which tried to take advantage of the weak organization in order to promote unarticulated work in the area.

As a community or neighborhood organization, this community presents the same problem as the "Catuche Social Consortium" in Venezuela. It is a rather closed community and therefore has limited channels for sharing, exchanging and participating in the local-level decision making.

It is equally an experience which is possible to be replicated, disseminated and promo-

ted. Even more so, after its urban proposal incorporated risk reduction variables as one of the baseline studies or characterizations.

- The Colombian initiative "Guardians of the Mountain Slope" shows how the lessons derived from this project were used by the city of Armenia, in the department of Quindio, for strengthening its own capacity for risk management. This is thus, an exceptional situation: a capital city from a department is learning lessons taught by peripheral municipalities. Event though Armenia was the city most affected by the earthquake from January 25, 1999, and the fact that its municipal government's capacity for risk management was strengthened as a consequence of the reconstruction efforts, when the municipal administration changed, those processes faced the risk of perishing. A new administration took the "forgotten" processes and took advantage of the results from the DIPECHO project and put them in motion once again.

8

The ensemble of social actors has or has had some participation (or responsibility) in the configuration of risk conditions..... and therefore has equal participation and responsibility in the transformation of those conditions.... In other words, in Risk Management

The interrelation, ownership and participation of local actors guarantee the sustainability of the processes generated and undertaken, beyond the projects or actions, as a way to achieve Local Risk Management becomes part of the integral local development.

Local participation means the socialization of the intervention process. This entails that external actors who promote projects or initiatives incorporate as active participants the subjects facing the risk at local level, the development actors, and the decision-making subjects at the same levels; aside from those external actors which by the nature of their interventions, have incidence in the configuration and the reduction of risk at local levels. Participation

should not be limited to the professional or technical staff from government organizations or formal organizations from the political realm, but it should also encompass civil society, popular and religious organizations, as well as others who are influential in the locality. The wider the participation, the higher the opportunities for reaching ownership and sustainability²⁶.

On another hand, the ownership of the management by the local actors is perhaps the most defining aspect of the process as a procedure. Ownership, and in consequence, the basis for the sustainability of the management process are based on the active participation of the civil society and local policy representations. Neverthe-

26 Document "A Guide on Good Practices derived from the parameters of Local Risk Management", drafted by Allan Lavell within the Project for the Systematization of Local Risk Management Experiences in Central America, implemented by the CEPREDENAC and BCPR-UNDP.

less, that can only be achieved to the extent that management is subject to some form of institutionalization or organization with the intention of being permanent or to be inserted into the structure of the local organization²⁷.

- The project "Guardians of the Mountain Slope", implemented in Manizales, Colombia, is a project that is born from the need and the initiative of the local actors. They identified their problems and proposed solutions which were appropriate and adequate for their reality, in benefit of the sustainability of its development.

The project gathers under a same goal the formal strategies of municipal administration, with the informal strategies of the communities at risk. Both stemming from much longer-term processes which will have to be extended into the future to the extent that "the marriage" between the communities and the mountain slopes cannot be dissolved.

However, if the strategy itself, as it has been proposed in "Guardians of the Mountain Slope" (which contemplates an economic compensation by the municipality for the mothers head of household who execute conservation tasks) remains or not, will depend upon several factors such as the political disposition of the authority and the availability of resources. It is not possible to ascertain in this moment if the communities would continue or not executing those tasks (which benefit the community itself) the moment that, for one reason or another, payments are interrupted. What we can be sure of is that mutual learning as a consequence of these processes lead to the creation of new tools which strengthen the capacity of the communities that inhabit risk areas, in spite of the "annihilating evidences".

- The Venezuelan experience "Catuche Social Consortium" is an example of how the issue of risks and disasters has been felt by the community. In the same

27 Idem

way that the community felt the need to get organized in view of the increasing violence and delinquency and the gang confrontations (1993), now they are once again getting organized in view of their concern for the river and for sanitation. In this process and in those circumstances, the support received by neighborhood associations and by the mayor was a determining factor.

As the organization did not meet all the juridical requirements for an organization, the capturing of economic resources was coordinated with an NGO and the work was aimed directly at improving the conditions of the neighborhood.

In 1999, approximately 600 houses were destroyed and not many deaths were registered as the organization was in charge of leading the evacuation. In view of that situation, the community undertook the responsibility of providing a solution by providing housing for the affected families. They become the Catuche Consortium, which has a technical command instance

in charge of verifying the technical proposal from the public ministries and organizations. They also organized training sessions in disaster prevention and they fought for obtaining the permits for developing a housing project in the area. The proposal was finally accepted by the government and they received the financing for implementing the housing project.

This experience illustrates the advantages of the populations and organizations when they adopt responsibly the issue of risks, and therefore commit themselves to providing sustainability to the search and promotion of actions throughout time.

- The Bolivian initiative "SUKA KOLLUS" is centered on community organization and abundant traditions. The project is able to strengthen community based organizations based on a collective fund for seed improvement. Besides the traditional practice, the project entailed the creation of the YAPUCHIRIS, a practice which is adopted naturally by the highland peoples. They work on the identification of in-

dicators regarding community observation and registration of signs inherited from their ancestors about the possibility of rain ahead. They observe birds, where they build their nests, if they do it in high parts of trees or medium or low heights. They also observe the flowers, the rain, the fox's hole, etc.

- The same way that we point out positive experiences from which we can extract "good practices" we find, for example, the Venezuelan experience which after having visited the

area in 1999, we can see that unfortunately nothing remains of the project; not even in the areas with better organization. Similarly, in other Venezuelan projects, when looking at the implemented projects we found that the training component only reached a low percentage of the population. Another Peruvian experience also mentions that the housing reconstruction projects have included few efforts for connecting or promoting the participation of the direct beneficiaries and the rest of the population.



Lessons Learned

Reflections in light of the case studies

In this stage, the information to gather consist mostly of perceptions or reflections, individual or collective, to show the lessons learned as a consequence of the process or experience, or the lessons that we should highlight and learn, in order to disseminate to many other actors and experiences.



A final question which leads to this section and we would like to mention is:

¿Are the relationships between the communities and their surroundings more sustainable as a consequence of the studied processes?

Although the true impact of these processes in terms of "harmonizing" the dynamics of nature with the dynamics of the participating

communities will only be known in the long term (and even though the time frame for the studied processes varies between only a few months – as in the case of the project in armed conflict areas; between 12 and 18 months – as in the case of the projects of "rehabilitation and reconstruction" supported in "response" or as a "consequence" of a disaster' or initiatives lasting between 2 and 5 years – as in the case of the reconstruction

project implemented in Venezuela; or a dozen years as in the case of the SUKA KOLLUS in general we can conclude that yes, there are indeed "evidences" which indicate that as a result of these processes the communities are making progress in terms of coexistence with their surrounding environment.

This assertion is even more visible when we recognize the NATIVE initiatives which go beyond the rigid deadlines and results which are common characteristics of developments projects and are also a part of our work. We see that in the case of the "Guardians of the Mountain Side", "CATUCHE Social Consortium" and the 'Self-Managed Community HUAYCÁN" they are examples recovered of the typical life in our countries, our rural and urban communities.

In general the disaster moments or occurrences which affected each one of the experiences mentioned generated, not a project, but a process that involves the population in recognizing that their territory presents risk conditions, until recreating or generating strategies which provide better safety, or in the worst case, to coexist with the situation, but being aware.

The scope of the evidence is also varied, depending on the participating actors: the prefecture of the department of La Paz now has a system for understanding better, the complex risks that affect the people and to act accordingly (at least to the extent that it is possible). In the city of Manizales, land slides are reduced and the life span of the infrastructure for risk prevention and mitigation. At the same time, the relationship between the community and the municipality is improved which contributes to reducing the economic vulnerability of the marginalized families. In the north of Potosí, as well as in the Quindío, the capacity for understanding the dynamics of the environment are improving; educational material is being produced for disseminating the lessons learned and local organizations in charge of the continued promotion of risk management in the municipalities are strengthened. In the armed conflict areas in Colombia the projects contribute to reducing the feeling of uncertainty of the civilian population and to take advantage of the risk management contributions for the recovery of the disrupted governance.

Following the same lead, the Venezuelan Red Cross now has training tools which allows them to replicate and carry out new training workshops in the states of Carabobo and Falcon. In the state of Miranda, the reconstruction was carried out, which allowed for the recovery and rehabilitation of schools and health centers, the execution of recovery strategies in the areas of agriculture and industry, activities for psycho-social rehabilitation for affected families, etc.

In the southern region of Perú, there are new housing units which were built using adequate and low cost technologies. The local technicians now have risk area maps, the population has emergency and prevention plans, and a brigade of young volunteers are trained in first aid and emergency drill exercises.

In the province of Napo, Ecuador, the organization has been strengthened with the creation of the COE's; the population has a better knowledge of the existing risks and they have emergency community plans. In Esmeraldas, the community's own initiative, led to the reforestation on the unstable hill sides and they now have their own community plans for the area.

The population of Catuche and Huaycán, on their end, have achieved (the first ones) the partial relocation of the families affected by the disasters of 1994 and 1999; and (the second ones), the canals of the existing canyons are used as vehicle routes as a preventive measure in case of disaster occurrence. It is also perceived that the population is incorporating into their day to day living a better understanding and awareness regarding the existing risk conditions and the need to do something about them.

Some of the lessons learned...

- 1 It isn't only Colombia, but in Latin America and the Caribbean, and in what is called the "third world" in general (including the "third world" pockets which can be found within developed countries) the areas which tend to have a higher risk level due to anthropic, natural or socio-natural causes tend to coincide with the areas with the lowest governance levels, the areas with higher presence of conflicts which in some cases even become armed conflicts. We could almost assert that two phenomena which are characteristic of marginalized areas are: high risk levels and lack of governability.

Hence the importance of using efficiently the opportunities that risk management entails as a space for building coexistence and governance. Both in Colombia as well as in other parts of the world it has been shown that when being subject to a common threat, the different actors of a conflict start to find ele-

ments which eventually may lead to constructive dialogue. What is indeed true is that risk management opens doors and facilitates the access to areas and people who are out of reach under any other flag.

- 2 A series of strategies exist, which have been developed, in a "spontaneous" and, as we have said, "silent" fashion, to which those in charge of promoting risk management in armed conflict areas have had to resource to. The fact that those strategies may contribute or not to the sustainability of the processes will depend upon different factors.
- 3 The strengthening of local capacities is a risk management strategy which seeks to reduce vulnerabilities and to improve the response capacity within the risk scenarios which result complex and invisible to the eyes of national systems which are mostly centralized and have scarce resources.
- 4 The lack of political predisposition for undertaking risk management as a State responsibility at the regional or local level (a

result, at the same time, of the rulers' ignorance regarding the complex causes of risks and disasters); the loss of institutional memory (in the state institutions, in implementing agencies and in the same financing agencies as well), and the loss of community memory (the pressure from other urgencies" or priorities²⁸ (and the incapacity for identifying the potential contributions for risk management for solving those "urgencies"); the lack of recognition by the communities that risk management is a right and an expression of the right to live and the right to protection by the State, etc.

- 5 It was not possible to achieve the commitment and predisposition on the side of local authorities from municipalities for adopting risk management as an institutional policy in the context of development.
- 6 The time frame of the project is short; in order to achieve higher

efficiency of the actions and so that they are articulated within viable development processes it is necessary to connect them to integral development strategies within the institution implementing the project.

- 7 The processes of local risk management that promote participation, capacity strengthening and decision making are experiences that may serve for the elaboration of national public policies.
- 8 In order to improve sustainability and replicability of the actions it is important to find strategic allies in the area who work in risk reduction.
- 9 It is necessary to keep in mind the own needs, priorities and perceptions of the population in relation to natural risks in order to incorporate them within more viable risk management interventions.

²⁸ In this case, for example, a DIPECHO III Project which had been planned for continuing with the previous ones was not carried out because the organization MEDICUS MUNDI moved to the south of Potosi in order to assist other communities affected by another emergency.

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| <p>10 There is a lack of coordination and knowledge between institutions and organizations with competencies and experience in risk management and disaster prevention.</p> <p>11 The fragility of the national policy institutions in charge of disaster prevention affects negatively, as it creates a lack of definition and confusion.</p> <p>12 The actions carried out for disaster prevention are undeniably integrated within a vision of integral development which seeks to reduce the patterns of inequality and exclusion.</p> <p>13 The community does not always collaborate where the intervention of the project or experience has been minimal.</p> <p>14 It is the responsibility of the State and local governments, as responsible for harmonious urban development, to use well defined policies for the construction of housing, with long term regulations in order to bring security to investors and adequate financing with wider population coverage.</p> | <p>15 The project or initiative should become a motivational tool for the social organizations, which leads to the discussion of the issues as well as the search for solutions.</p> <p>16 The changes in the electoral-political situations can many times generate interruptions or somehow impact the execution of the interventions, because they tend to bring changes of authorities or staff.</p> <p>17 The development of all those local practices on their own do not constitute a guarantee for the continuity of the processes, because governmental changes and the high turnover rate of staff demonstrate that if the processes do not involve the authorities and the commitment of resources for their sustainability, by the end of the project the information and the recommendations can be lost due to inadequate administration.</p> <p>18 A determining factor is to ensure the connection of the experiences with the day to day realities and the needs of the com-</p> |
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Lessons Learned

munities, and therefore, with their solutions, as part of the continuous process for local risk management, in order to achieve sustainability of those efforts throughout time and the ownership and commitment of the communities with those initiatives.

19 Local organizations demand higher control of resources through social auditing applied to the implementing organization by the donors, as well as a better socialization of the resources and activities upon the project's completion.



Learning From the Lessons

Andean Strategy for Disaster Prevention and Relief (EAPAD)

We think and we are sure that the current document LOCAL RISK MANAGEMENT AND DISASTER PREPAREDNESS IN THE ANDEAN REGION – Lessons learned and systematization of good practices, is an important contribution for the processes which have been generated in the region. There is a history of many years of working in the issue of disasters and a long history of disasters that our countries live and have lived. For this reason we need to try to read and interpret how and in what ways our strategies and practices stem from the reflections and analysis of our previous experiences, but always taking an extra step in the task of disaster reduction.



The systematization of the lessons learned regarding the past and the current risk management and disaster preparedness actions becomes a necessity. The identification of best practices will allow to advance in the improvement and strengthening of capacities, by generating better proposals, more viable and with the clear objectives of not only getting prepared for the next emergency, but also progressively reducing the risk conditions that we live and coexist with.

Notwithstanding, the efforts and initiatives like the ones presented herein, or the ones summarized in this document have to transcend beyond their own experience.

Greater articulation is required with the processes that are being generated in each one of the countries involved, or better yet, in the regional arena, with proposals and initiatives that are being supported and that arise in the future.

In Venezuela, for example, there has been work done in regards to the preparation of an Organic Law Proposal for Risk management which is currently being discussed and debated by the National Assembly of Venezuela, and is awaiting approval.

We mention that initiative because we think it is important to review part of the document text "Exposition of Reasons" which accompa-

nies the law proposal. In such document, the high risk of the country and the responsibility of the State in the configuration of those conditions is pointed out and recognized. It is thus, mentioned that the State should adopt a more comprehensive and integral vision of the problem, and therefore that the search for solutions means the incorporation of the risk variable within the political agenda and the development of the country. In other words, that risk management becomes state policy and that it is managed by the President of the Country.

Moreover, what is interesting regarding the Law proposal is that it proposes the establishment of directive principles for guiding National Policies at all levels, guaranteeing the sustainable development in risk prevention and mitigation aspects, in permanent preparedness, and disaster and emergency relief as well as in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the regions and localities affected by those events. In other words, it proposes the incorporation of risk management and planning for national development (territorial zoning, investment plans, control and penalties for risk

generating activities, support to educational processes, etc.) as well as promoting research in the area of risk and the strengthening of institutional and civilian capacities in risk management.

Venezuela illustrates, in one way or another, the trends and changes that are occurring in the region regarding the concern, interest and dimensions that the issue of disaster reduction starts to generate in the region.

For this purpose we have decided to annex to this document a regional initiative of great relevance in these times of changes and construction of a new dimension in this regard: the Andean Strategy for Disaster Prevention and Relief (EAPAD) .



Andean Strategy for Disaster Prevention and Relief -EAPAD-

Formulation, approval and implementation process

Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Perú and Venezuela are the members of the Andean Community and they are moving forward in a subregional integration process which is developed in multiple dimensions with the participation of important subregional organizations which come together in the **Andean Integration System (AIS)**. The Andean presidential Council and the Foreign Affairs Minister Andean Council are the highest political figures in the subregion. The Andean Community's Secretariat has a central role in the follow-up and development of the decisions and the political commitments.

The issue of disaster prevention and relief has been institutionalized in the agenda of the Andean

Community and are evidenced in important achievements where the creation of the **Andean Committee for Disaster Prevention and Relief (CAPRADE)**²⁹ stands out. It is an advisory institution for the SIA which aims at contributing to the reduction of risk and the reduction of the impact from natural and anthropic disasters through the coordination and promotion of policies, strategies and plans, as well as the promotion of activities in regards to disaster prevention and relief.

Within this context the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), through the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) and the representations of the UNDP in the countries of the subregion have supported the Andean Community Secretariat and CAPRADE in the formulation, discussion and approval of the **Andean Strategy for Disaster Prevention and Relief**, as the directive mechanism for policies, plans, programs and actions which are required to undertake in the subregion in order to achieve its goals.

29 El CAPRADE se crea mediante la Decisión 529 del 2001 del Consejo Andino de Ministros de Relaciones Exteriores.

The Andean Strategy for Disaster Prevention and Relief was approved in the city of Quito, Ecuador, in June 15, 2004 during the III Meeting of the Andean Committee for Disaster Prevention and Relief (CAPRADE). Later on, the strategy was also approved by the Andean Council of Foreign Affairs Ministers on July 10, 2004, during the Third Ordinary meeting which also took place in the city of Quito, Ecuador.

Its approval is an important step in the subregional efforts for addressing jointly an institutional evolution process for the development of public policies and capacities for disaster prevention and relief.

The Andean Strategy for Disaster Prevention and Relief (EAPAD) is framed within the purpose of seeking the countries' development under a perspective of sustainability; observing the recognized principles and global commitments acquired at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, in Rio de Janeiro (1992); the First World Summit for Disaster Reduction, Yokohama 1995; Kyoto Conference 1997; Quebec Summit 2001; the content of Agenda 21 and reconfirmed at the Johannesburg Summit in September 2002.

The formulation of the strategy

...More than just a product it is and it was a process

The formulation of the Strategy was supported by the entities which in every country represent the CAPRADE: the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, the entities responsible for planning for development and the Civil Defense and/or Civil Protection institutions (in the case of Colombia the National Directorate for Disaster Prevention and Relief from the Ministry of the Interior also participates). This way, CAPRADE represents not only the processes of planning for development but also the emergency relief processes.

The formulation of the Andean Strategy is the result of the joint effort between entities which are traditionally connected to disaster prevention and relief along with others that are just getting involved in the issue. The Strategy has been built based on a wide participation and national discussion process through meetings and workshops.

The process involved around 500 staff members and 282 entities of the five countries in the subregion, as well as national planning institutions, Civil Defense and Protection institutions, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, entities of scientific knowledge and universities, regional and local governments, operational, communitarian and international organizations and a large number of technicians and directors from ministries and sectoral entities related to housing, water, sanitation, transportation, roads, agriculture and health. This reflects the potential and the interest that sectoral entities have regarding the issue.

Follow-up and guidance for the formulation process was received from numerous United Nations Organizations, international cooperation agencies and Andean Community entities such as the Andean Foment Corporation has been valuable.

Its objectives...

The Andean Strategy for Disaster Prevention and Relief will seek to contribute to the reduction of risk and the impact of disasters in order to support the sustainable development in all countries of the Andean subregion, through institutional strengthening and the establishment of common policies, strategies, programs and subprograms for all countries; the exchange of experiences, the creation of networks and the continuous improvement of mutual cooperation in disaster situations.

Considering that the five countries share common risks, it is suggested that integration can help improve capacities in key areas such as the risk knowledge, planning for development, risk management, preparedness for crisis situations and for risks in border areas, river beds or common interest areas.

An important characteristic of the strategy lies in the promotion of work agendas for development sectors which have traditionally been isolated from risk issues even though they are important actors. That is the case of the roads sector, agriculture, energy, water and sanitation, as well as those which are traditionally associated with risk issues such as health, territorial zoning and housing.

Another important characteristic of the Strategy is its effort for articulating subregional and international agendas, especially with the social and environmental agendas, and with border development policies in areas where there are points in common.

Sectorial Strategies

The Andean Strategy understands that the challenge of disaster prevention and relief is a multidimensional responsibility which requires inter-sector, inter-disciplinary and inter-territorial responses. Disaster Prevention and Relief requires that the entities in charge of development be responsible for undertaking the incorporation of the issue in the planning and management of their own sector, in accordance to disaster prevention and relief national policies in each country.

The Strategy contains a series of strategic, common as well as specific guidelines for the agricultural, water and sanitation, housing, roads and transportation, energy, mining and industry, tourism, commerce and education sectors.

The common sectoral guidelines for every sector are mainly related to risk analysis and the identification of disaster risks, the formulation of policy guidelines and methodologies for incorporating them into the sectoral plans for expansion and maintenance, the development of institutional thematic networks, their application into training programs for technicians and professionals and the strengthening of risk information, communication, and monitoring systems.

In regards to the specific strategic guidelines, the Strategy points out sensible and transcendental issues for each sector. For example, the dissemination of insurance policies and the support to sectoral participation in risk reduction for the agriculture sector, the design of methodologies for managing water supply basins, the harmonization of technical norms for construction of safe housing, the development of management plans for the health sector that articulate environmental variables with risk factors, the homogenization of norms for safety guidelines for roads and the promotion of contingency plans for hydrocarbons spills, among others.

Thematic Axes

In order to achieve the goals of the Strategy, five thematic axes were defined. They are initial programs and subprograms which respond to action guidelines in line with the main needs and weaknesses which were diagnosed for the subregion. They are:

1. Strengthening of the institutions and the capacities at subregional, national and local level;
2. Development of information and research;
3. Risk monitoring and evaluation
4. Awareness raising and promotion of a "disaster prevention and relief" social participation culture;
5. Mutual assistance in disaster situations.

The thematic axes as well as their programs and subprograms are articulated among each other, they are inter-dependent and not necessarily sequential. It is understood that disaster reduction will be the result of adequate processes of

planning for development. These planning processes require access to applicable scientific information, pertinent technical models and information systems for the analysis and decision making by the planners. Similarly, in order to have viable development of planning processes as well as the generation of information, it is necessary to have sound public policies.

Adequate disaster relief requires preparedness processes based on risk monitoring and evaluation and inter-institutional response agreements. Disaster preparedness, like disaster reduction requires information and communication systems and public policies that provide the juridical, technical and financial support which this phase of the process requires.

Similarly, a basic condition for reaching the commitment of public figures, communities and individuals in regard to disaster reductions issues, is the development of an adequate institutional, political and public culture in regards to disaster prevention and relief.

Thematic Axis 1

Strengthening of institutions and capacities at national, local and sub-regional level. One of the main commitments contemplated in this axis is the design and implementation of and Andean System for Disaster Prevention and Relief, which is a group of institutional, sectoral and thematic networks, as well as, programs, plans and actions developed for carrying out the Strategy. The System will be based on the creation of coordination, communication, and subregional cooperation mechanisms between actors which share interests, observing sustainability and organizational autonomy criteria.

Another set of commitments included in this thematic axis are the commitments from the countries for promoting and strengthening permanent disaster prevention and relief institutional schemes; the strengthening of institutions responsible for planning, operations and risk knowledge; the incorporation of knowledge and disaster reduction criteria into policies, laws,

planning schemes and sectoral or territorial norms; and the empowerment of municipalities or localities in these issues.

Thematic Axis 2

Information, Research and Development. The production and use of information regarding risks is a fundamental input for decision making in planning processes and for the development of a disaster prevention culture.

The development of information systems, the conformation of research networks, the transfer of experiences and a coherent systematization which allow wider access to data and information on the issue are essential organizational tools for disaster reduction in the XXI century.

Another basic component of the axis is the production and exchange of action models, especially juridical norms, methodologies and techniques for common reference as well as the development of specialized research in the subregion.

Thematic Axis 3

Identification, assessment and risk monitoring, early warning and specific plans. The assessment and monitoring of threats and risks, the dissemination of forecasts and the management of warning systems are all basic tools for the execution of preparedness for emergency and contingency plans. The programs and subprograms will undertake the creation and continuous improvement of warning systems and the strengthening of planning processes for emergencies.

Thematic Axis 4

The Promotion of a Culture of Prevention and Social Participation. It is essential to promote and strengthen a culture of prevention among the population and the socialization of the knowledge with other sectors of society, emphasizing on the most vulnerable groups.

A central pillar of this thematic axis is to promote and encourage social actors involved with science, technology and education systems to adopt a proactive role in the production of information about th-

reats, vulnerabilities and risks, and to ensure the transfer of information to educational and scientific communities, to the public and private sector, and to the planning and decision-making processes as well as to the population at large.

The Strategy promotes the incorporation of risk reduction into citizen culture, promoting training processes in elementary and high schools; the improvement of the institutional culture by developing training systems appropriately designed and organized, as well as public information strategies that make efficient use of the transforming effect of the media.

It is a policy of the subregion to look for the implementation of mechanisms that facilitate the intervention of the community in disaster prevention and relief, as well as non governmental organizations, and an increasingly active participation of individuals, for the adoption of a responsible and active role in the safety conditions at personal, family or community level.

Thematic Axis 5

Mutual Assistance for Disaster Situations. Mutual assistance in case of disaster is an axis which should become the tool for Andean Countries, for facing emergency or disaster situations that occur in one or more countries and which cannot be addressed or resolved in its entirety by one country and which therefore require the solidarity and humanitarian collaboration from Andean Countries and the international community.

This thematic axis promotes the establishment of a technical and normative framework in the countries of the subregion in order to make possible the channeling of mutual assistance in case of disasters and the functioning of subregional operation networks for emergencies and disasters.

Proposal for the publication, launching and elaboration of the EAPAD's Strategic Plan.

The UNDP participated and supported the IV CAPRADE Meeting which took place in Lima, on Sep-

tember 13 and 14, 2004. It was agreed that the General Secretariat of the Andean Community would promote a dissemination strategy in each of the member countries through the work to be organized at the @-CAN site for the knowledge of the participants. For this purpose, the member countries would have the support from the UNDP. It was also agreed to have a launching event in every country of the subregion for the Andean Strategy for Disaster Prevention and Relief (EAPAD). The main goal of the launching event is to encourage political and technical actors from national public and private institutions, as well as international organizations who are interested in the is-

sue, to know the strategy and adopt commitments for its development, for the fulfillment of its mandate and for the implementation of its programs and subprograms.

Finally, it was agreed to elaborate the Andean Strategy Action Plan, which hereon will be known as the Strategic Plan, to be formulated by the General Secretariat of the Andean Community, with the presidency of CAPRADE and support from the UNDP as well as with the active participation of national entities which have been participating in the formulation processes of formulation of the Strategy, and from cooperating organizations.

Risk management involves different levels of State and Society and has a direct link with the existence of global, regional, and national policies addressing this issue within the framework of the development processes.

One must not forget that in order for local actions to be effective and sustainable in the long run, they must be in harmony with the national, regional and global environment. It must be highlighted that many experiences in the region exist, which constitute examples of 'best practices' and provide tools that can be applied in different situations, showing how the strengthening of local abilities can favor or increase the security of socially vulnerable groups. Despite the variety of experiences, until now there has been no promotion of systematization processes that permit the evaluation of achievements and advancements on the subject, as well as the rescuing of lessons learned that can be replicated and adapted to other contexts.

In view of this reality, the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Relief (BCPR) of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) takes the task of promoting the Regional Project "Systematization and Dissemination of Best Practices in Disaster Relief and Local Risk Management in the Andean Region" with the purpose of making it available to the different regional, national, and local actors linked with the issue. This project is also of great interest of the Disaster Preparedness Program of the Humanitarian Aid Department of the European Community (DIPECHO), who promoted the idea and, together with the BCPR/UNDP provided the financial support for its execution. The project has been formulated and is being executed by UNDP within the framework of DIPECHO's Third Plan of Action.

The current regional project that started in May, 2004, has achieved the compilation of an estimated 60 experiences in the Andean Community. Fifteen have been selected as "case studies", three experiences per country, in order to systematize them through a participative process involving regional, national and local actors. The case studies are the basis for extracting lessons, systematizing processes and interventions, and recovering best practices that help improve future interventions in disaster preparedness issues, and also produce knowledge as a basis for developing policies, strategies, programs and tools for Local Risk Management (LRM).